Just Where Were You On December 31, 1899?

Local Rialto Was Crowded and Gay, Also Snowy and Cold That Night

By Jay Carmody

Humanity last night made a sharp left turn into the last half of the 20th century, its tires screeching and its eyes agleam with a blend of bewilderment and hope.

That was all right with the drama department which had chosen not to be there. It had gone back 50 years when Washington and the world were making what they thought was a right turn into the first half of the century.

New Year's Day came on Monday that January 1, 1900. There was snow on the ground, the Eastern Branch was frozen and the temperature was 3 degrees above zero, but the town turned out for entertainment. A century was turning and a thing like that has to be celebrated. Theatrical producers saw to it that these restless ones had a place to go—to theaters and halls which, with two exceptions, have long since gone.

Entertainment Was Alive.

Entertainment was "live" then, most of it concentrated in the area of Pennsylvania avenue from Seventh to Fifteenth streets, but there was enough of it to make the populace gay and to keep a flock of critics busy. The movies made a single furtive appearance in The Star's amusement page, in the New Grand's program which offered "polite vaudeville and the moving pictures." No titles, no stars, just pictures that moved.

The biggest show in town that night was "The Elder Miss Blossom," with "Mr. and Mrs. Kendell." This was where the smart set gathered, a whole theater full of the smart set just as the Lunts draw the grandchildren with the same names today. Or would if the Lunts, not Rosalind Russell on celluloid, were playing the E street house.

It was good to see Mr. and Mrs. Kendall in "The Elder Miss Blossom," for while The Star's critic could not rhapsodize over the play, he could write happily that "there is an air of comfort and security about a Kendall performance" which surely is something that few Washingtonians got out of last night.

"Princess Chic" Had a Cold.

The flibberty-gibbets that night 50 years ago found their dramatic lure in a new musical, "Princess Chic," at the Lafayette, which later became the Belasco and after that a warehouse, and which again promises to become a theater in 1950.

The "Princess Chic" was a new and shining thing, as chic princesses very well should be, but this reviewer's predecessor found it in a quite unfinished state. In words that still constitute the liveliest cliche in the vocabulary of criticism, he reported it still "needed work" before going on to Broadway.

His favorite player apparently was the soubrette (another cliche that has come down to this generation). With a touch of gentle compassion, he reported that the poor, pretty thing "had a cold but nevertheless sang soubrettishly and danced with care." This dancing with care might suggest a better attitude toward their work on the part of—but why bring that up?

It was the orchestra which took the pummeling that night in the critic's chiding observation that it "was by no means up to the mark."

The other legitimate play was William Gilette's "Secret Service',' which was playing the Academy, Gillette was not here as star and the play was in its third season but a goodly audience saw it nevertheless. Whether it agreed with the billing as "the greatest American play ever written," is something the reviewer did not record. He was satisfied, however, that it was good entertainment.

Coming, "A Runaway Girl."

The Jeff De Angeles company was at the Columbia that night, the same Columbia that stands at Twelfth and F streets today. It was doing a musical, "The Jolly Musketeer," which was lively enough, but what Columbia fans really were looking forward to was the next week's attraction. That was Augustin Daly's "A Runaway Girl," a spicier item, which turned in a box office that showed a lively community spirit.

Burlesque, naturally, had a big night that eve of 1900. This was at the Bijou, where "a hot burlesque with 30 pretty girls and 10 witty comedians" was being advertised. Burlesque later got down to fewer clothes and fewer comedians, but it did capacity when the century turned and the customers went out into the snow feeling fit and frivolous.

Twentieth centurians (or whatever we are) who grew up hearing of vaudeville's death until television revived it, should be interested to read The Star's critic on the Grand Opera House that night: "That vaudeville is still growing in favor was strongly emphasized last night, etc." It also was being strongly emphasized the same night at Kernan's, the senior vaudeville house where Sam Devere's 10-act program was playing.

Prices? Oh, yes, prices! They ran from 25 cents to $1.50 top in the legitimate houses, 25 to 50 cents for grade-A vaudeville, and for the single straight movie at Convention Hall—the Jeffries-Sharkey fight—from 25 cents to $1.50.

This is how it was and who knows whether it was better or worse than now?

At any rate, a Happy New Half Century to every one!

Vocal Comeback

By the Associated Press

HOLLYWOOD.

Here's a switch: Judith Anderson, famed for her powerful dramatics, will warble "Alice Ben Bolt" and "The Trail to Mexico" in a Western firm.

While Miss Anderson isn't quite a novice at singing, it's been 25 years since she did any professional vocalizing. She once studied voice and in 1924 appeared as a singer in the play, "The Dove."

Miss Anderson will make her vocal comeback in "The Furies," an adaptation of the Niven Busch novel.

Educational Work

By the Associated Press

HOLLYWOOD.

One learns something every day in educational Hollywood.

James Mason, for instance, now knows how to give a hypo to a horse. A "Death on a Side Street" scene required the British actor to inject a medicant into an ailing nag.

Mason, a stickler for realism, called for a technical adviser. So, one Joseph Suggs, a local veterinarian, was put on the payroll for three days to teach Mason the fine point of wielding a hypodermic needle.

Out of Practice?

By the Associated Press

HOLLYWOOD.

Montgomery Clift has had an unusual career for a romantic leading man. Perhaps that's why he had to kiss Shelley Winters 132 times, by press agent's tally, before Director George Stevens was satisfied.

There was no love interest in Clift's first film, "The Search." Romance was a minor thread in the plot of "Red River," his second. In "The Heiress" he wooed and lost a girl who frowned on smooching.

Possibly out of practice, Clift had trouble delivering exactly the kiss Director Stevens wanted for a scene in "A Place in the Sun." Only after extensive rehearsals and shots from several angles did Stevens finally say, "Print it." Only three of the 132 smacks will be used in the film.

Family Affair

By the Associated Press

HOLLYWOOD.

Both of the leads in "Jet Pilot" are named Morrison. They are Marion Michael Morrison, formerly of Winterset, Iowa, and Jeanette Morrison, once of Merced, Calif. But you might know them better as John Wayne and Janet Leigh.

THE EXHIBITORS' FRIENDS—Bob Hope, with "Paleface" and "Sorrowful Jones," ousted Bing Crosby this year from the top position in the Motion Picture Herald's annual list of leading money-making film stars. John Wayne (left) and Esther Williams (right) were 1949 newcomers to Hollywood's big 10.

Hope Leads Money Stars For 1949

By Harold Heffernan

HOLLYWOOD.

The Motion Picture Herald's annual tabulation of the biggest money-making stars of the year, released Friday, carries something of a surprise in the elevation of Bob Hope to No. 1 position over his arch rival and dearest enemy, Bing Crosby.

Crosby had corralled the honor for five consecutive years, although Hope, in a couple of previous ballotings, came very close to displacing him.

Others in the all-important list of 10, following Hope and Crosby, are Abbott and Costello—now under suspension at Universal-International — John Wayne, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Betty Grable, Esther Williams, Humphrey Bogart and Clark Gable.

Hope's defeat of Crosby is attributed to the fact that even though he had only two releases in 1949 to Crosby's three, Bob's were offerings of sensational box-office caliber. Both "Paleface," in which he received the important support of Jane Russell, and "Sorrowful Jones" were probably the most successful movies of Hope's career. The latter was so popular Paramount is plotting a sequel.

Bing's Bad Year.

On the other hand, Crosby's three were of the mediocre brand, to put it kindly, and certainly not to be tabbed with the better Crosby efforts in the past. "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court," a stodgy, costume musical, was saved from utter failure only by Bing's warbling.

"The Emperor Waltz," liberally applauded by the critics, didn't have much nudge at the gate and "Top o' the Morning," his latest, never seemed to get anyplace—even when Crosby was in front of the camera.

Bing's year was so bad from a quality standpoint that many consider him lucky to have grabbed the second-place spot in the Herald's poll.

Two Newcomers.

Two stars pop into the "money-making 10" limelight for the first time—John Wayne and Esther Williams. Wayne appeared in no fewer than seven starring pictures during the year and possibly gained his rating mainly by pure numerical strength. Esther's elevation offers proof to the theory that novelty pictures, featuring personable figures in the realm of sports and outdoor fields, can forge their way to commanding positions in the movies. Strictly an acting novice when she reported to MGM five years ago as a beautiful swimming and diving champ, Esther has scampered to a place among the glamor greats.

It is rather a strange commentary that a swimmer should lead the entire pack of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer stars, touted as the largest and most dynamic group in the business. She placed two above the mighty Clark Gable, MGM's only other performer to win a spot.

In view of the fact that the Herald's ratings are drawn straight from the money tills of some 5,000 American exhibitors, who annually participate in the voting, drastic shakeups in production plans might be in order soon on the Leo lot.

Duel on the Range.

In the Western division, which is tabulated separately, Roy Rogers and Gene Autry waged a ding-dong race and at the finish Rogers had only a few votes margin—but enough to win—over his biggest hoss-opry rival. Following them came George "Gabby" Hayes, Tim Holt, William Elliott, Charles Starrett, Bill Boyd, Johnny Mack Brown, Smiley Burnette and Andy Devine.

The rating of today's king of television films, Hopalong Boyd, in seventh is an oddity. Of course, it is explainable by Bill's absence from picture-making for the last three years. On television, where some 50 of his thrilling Westerns are being played and replayed, Bill is definitely the top Western actor. A man, in fact, who might defeat Milton Berle if they were ever pitted.

The Herald's 1949 poll is the 18th in that trade publication's history.

Clark Gable is the only star placing on that first list of money-makers who is still packing them in today—a striking testimonial to his perpetual public appeal.

(Released by the North American Newspaper Association.)

Actress Says Intelligence Is Rare in Hollywood Men

By Bob Thomas

HOLLYWOOD.

Intelligent men are sadly lacking in Hollywood, says startling Shelley Winters.

Miss Winters, who is not as dull-witted as you might gather from the roles she plays on the screen, goes even further. She names the five most intelligent men she has met in Hollywood. They are:

1. George Stevens, who directed her in "A Place in the Sun." "His intelligent approach to his work brings better work from actors than they knew they were capable of."

2. Farley Granger, her fairly steady date. "He has extreme integrity for his job as a movie actor and studies hard at it."

3. Marlon Brando, a recent date. "He knows three or four languages and constantly seeks new knowledge—making himself a better actor."

4. Charlie Chaplin. "Despite what his critics may say, he remains a great humanitarian, a courageous man and a superb artist."

5. Charles Laughton. "He unselfishly imparts all his vast knowledge of the art of acting to the new generation—not only to those with talent, but to any one who seeks his learning."

Avoid Serious Subjects.

"Of course," she added quickly, "these are just my selections out of the men I have met here. I haven't met them all—yet. But I'm working on that."

The actress indicated that intelligence is as scarce as Florida grapefruit in Hollywood.

"People here seem to be ashamed of seeming intelligent," she said. "They avoid talking about serious subjects, with the result that the conversation is superficial and shallow."

She cited a party she recently attended with other Hollywood notables. The other guests were kicking around Laurence Olivier's "Hamlet" and Shelley was defending it.

A well-known wit cracked, "Unfortunately, tonight you are entitled to your opinion."

Invited Just Once.

Shelley blew up. "Why, you half-baked wit with second-class musical talent, you're darn right I'm entitled to my opinion," she cried, bursting into tears and fleeing the place.

"Funny—I get invited to more houses just once," she commented on the incident.

The actress admitted that her own career doesn't appear destined to follow intellectual lines.

"The studio sent out a brochure on my picture, 'South Sea Sinner,'" she said. "All that was visible on the cover was a picture from my shoulders to my thighs.

"For this, I took all those dramatic lessons!"

Today's Schedules

AMBASSADOR — "The Inspector General": 1, 3:05, 5:15, 7:25 and 9:40 p.m. "Hasty Heart": 11:40 p.m.

CAPITOL — "Adam's Rib": 12:45, 3:30, 6:15, 9 and 11:45 p.m. Stage Shows: 2:40, 5:25, 8:10 and 11 p.m.

COLUMBIA—"Ambush": 2, 3:55, 5:55, 7:50, 9:50 and 11:45 p.m.

DUPONT — "Germany Year Zero": 1:10, 2:55, 4:45, 6:30, 8:20 and 10:10 p.m.

KEITH'S — "The Outlaw": 1:30, 3:45, 5:45, 7:45, 9:45 and 11:45 p.m.

METROPOLITAN — "Port of New York": 1:50, 3:50, 5:50, 7:50 and 9:50 p.m. "Montana": 11:10 p.m.

LITTLE — "Never Give A Sucker An Even Break": 1:10, 3:50, 6:30 and 9:15 p.m.

NATIONAL—"Tell It to the Judge": 1:20, 2:50, 4:25, 6, 7:35, 9:10 and 10:40 p.m.

PALACE — "On the Town": 1:10, 3:15, 5:25, 7:30, 9:40 and 11:45 p.m.

PIX — "Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man": 1, 3:30, 5:55, 8:25, 10:50 p.m. and 1:15 a.m.

PLAYHOUSE — "All the King's Men": 1:25, 3:30, 5:35, 7:45 and 9:55 p.m.

TRANS-LUX — "Pirates of Capri": 1, 2:50, 4:45, 6:35, 8:30 and 10:20 p.m.

WARNER — "The Inspector General": 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:35, and 9:40 p.m. "Hasty Heart": 11:45 p.m.

Problem Solved

By the Associated Press

HOLLYWOOD.

The problem: How to keep 37 restless kids, ages 4 to 11, quiet. Producer Robert Cohn was shooting a dramatic scene in a hospital isolation ward where the children were patients. They were co-operative during takes, but as soon as the camera stopped the clamor began and adult actors couldn't hear themselves rehearse.

The solution: Cohn set up a projector at the rear of the stage and ran off silent cartoons. The kids were quietly spellbound while the grownups finished rehearsing.

War Picture Cycle Gets Under Way

By Jack Quigg

HOLLYWOOD.

War films, considered death at the box office while memories of the late carnage were still fresh, are making a lucrative comeback.

After World War II movie moguls called a halt to production of battle dramas, predicting it would be 10 years before the public would accept them. Soldier and civilian, they figured, would need a decade to forget the nightmares of slaughter.

Then last year a couple of studios tested the market with "Command Decision" and "Home of the Brave." When these films drew crowds the race was on. Now, five and a half years ahead of schedule, the screen is refreshing old war memories with a spate of films about fighting men.

The armed services, each after public prestige, bent over backward to help studios make films about their heroes. The Navy supplied ships and planes for "Task Force." The Army provided tanks and guns for "Battleground." The Marines threw thousands of troops into mock combat for "Sands of Iwo Jima." The Air Force gave the makers of "Twelve O'Clock High" reels of film showing bombers in action.

More than half a dozen war movies were made last year and more are planned.

Hollywood was quicker on the trigger after this war than it was after World War I. "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" hit the scren in 1921, then fighting films were gorgotten until 1925 when "The Big Parade" teed off a five-year cycle. The unforgettables of that era were "What Price Glory?" "Rookies," one of the few war comedies; "All Quiet on the Western Front" and "Hell's Angles."

Thus far the only comedy film since the second war is "Francis," an unlikely tale of a talking mule on the battlefields of Burma.

The films Hollywood is making now are of a different stripe than wartime dramas such as "Wake Island," "Guadalcanal Diary," "Purple Heart," "They Were Expendable" and "The Story of G. I. Joe." These were enlistment posters which also served to spur the war effort. Their stock in trade was heroics.

The new crop is often critical of brass, politicians, red tape and inefficiency. G. I.'s aren't always heroes. The films are realistic and sometimes terrifying.

For better or worse the war film cycle is here. It will last as long as the public can take it.

Stars Should Be Happy If Wishes Come True

Being a List of Some of the Things That Would Brighten the New Year

By Sheilah Graham

HOLLYWOOD.

My new year "wishes" for the stars: For Robert Mitchum, the payment of all his debts. Last time I talked with Bob he told me he wouldn't see financial daylight for two more years . . . To Lucille Ball, a baby, adopted or otherwise. Lucille is all for adopting an infant. Husband Desi Arnaz is adamant about waiting to have one of their own.

Joan Fontaine—a reconciliation with her husband, Bill Dozier. Because that, in spite of her too-vehement denials, is what she madly wants. . . . To sister Olivia de Havilland—another Oscar—for "The Heiress." And another baby. Livvy is currently obsessed by both.

For John Wayne, at least two babies to bless his present marriage with Esperanza . . . Rosalind Russell—an even career balance. For two years Roz made very dramatic movies. Now she is going overboard on light frothy comedies. Somewhere in between, she is an excellent actress. . . . For the Tyrone Powers, a baby. Ditto for Lana Turner and Bob Topping. Both Linda and Lana lost expected babies during 1949.

For Douglas, a "Champion."

For Fred MacMurray, good health for wife Lillian, who has been a semi-invalid for the past 10 years. . . . Kirk Douglas and another "Champion" and another appraisal of his broken marriage with Diana. It seemed okay, before his big success. They have two children.

My wish for Abbott and Costello is that they would stop changing their respective home telephone numbers. This they do on an average of once a week. Which makes it difficult for me to check on their fights with Universal - International, which happen on an average of once a week.

For Shirley Temple? Not too many dates, or too many romances for 1950. She is 21—"a bit soured on matrimony." A bit apprehensive of the future. But to millions all over the world, she is still "Little Miss Marker."

For Joan, Marriage.

My wish for Bette Davis is a new set of ideas and new advisers for her movies. Whoever told her to wear that black wig in "Beyond the Forest" is beyond everything.

Betty Grable—More musicals that show her legs. That is what she has the best of. It's criminal to hide the stems in long period dresses, period.

Joan Caulfield—Marriage with Jean Arthur's ex, Frank Ross. If nothing goes wrong, this is scheduled for late March . . . Barbara Stanwyck—an interest in common with her husband. Or at least time off from movies to spend together, so they can see something of each other. . . . Clark Gable?—Another "Gone With the Wind"—and another Carole Lombard. . . . And we all hope he has found her in Lady Sylvia Stanley. . . .

For Deanna, a Song.

For Ronald Coleman—Perpetual youth. Ronnie is 60 years old. But who else can match that suave polish, unless it's Walter Pidgeon?

Deanna Durbin doesn't seem to wish for anything at this low point in her career. I wish she'd take a toehold of herself, reduce, and come back to pictures, to sing.

For Yvonne de Carlo—A man she can marry. And Ed Luckenbach seems to fit the bill. . . . Bob Hope—A settlement of his present contract battles with Paramount. . . . To Wanda Hendrix and Audie Murphy—a cure for the nervous tummy that leads to ulcers. . . . Frank Sinatra, for him my wish is that he can overtake his big income-tax payments. What's the use of earning all that money, unless you can save.

For myself—Another visit to "South Pacific."

(Released by North American Newspaper Alliance.)

Coming Attractions

AMBASSADOR—"The Great Lover," with Bob Hope, starting Saturday.
CAPITOL—"Intruder in the Dust," with David Brian.
COLUMBIA—"Shadow of a Doubt," with Joseph Cotton.
DUPONT—"Strangers in the House," with Raimu.
KEITH'S — "Bagdad," with Maureen O'Hara.
METROPOLITAN — "Back Street," with Charles Boyer, starting Saturday.
LITTLE — "Rigoletto," with Tito Gobbi.
NATIONAL—"There's a Girl in My Heart," with Lee Bowman.
PALACE — "Battleground," with Van Johnson.
PLAYHOUSE—"Tight Little Island," with Basil Radford.
TRANS-LUX — "My Foolish Heart," with Susan Hayward.
WARNER — "The Great Lover," with Bob Hope, starting Saturday.